

FEBRUARY 2023

VOLUME 48, ISSUE 5

St. Lucie Audubon Society

Fostering appreciation of nature in St Lucie County, Florida, since 1954



The Laughing Gull

President's Message

By Ellen Lynch

Our General Meeting this month will be held in person at the Oxbow Eco-Center as usual. Our guest speaker is coming from Gainesville to present a special talk on "Surprising Facts about the Short-Tailed Hawk." Gina Kent is a Senior Conservation Specialist at Avian Research & Conservation Institute. We hope many of you will come to see her presentation and meet her on February 2nd at 7:30 pm. If unable, you may watch the meeting on our Facebook Page.

We held the first of three Adams Ranch Events on 1/14. It was very cold and all the people were bundled up and handled the weather very well. We received a lot of compliments and comments about how the tour was a wonderful event for them. This fund-raising event is our main source of income and the volunteers that work these days are appreciated so much. Many thanks go to Harriet Scott, Event Chair, Liz Dunleavy, past President, and her daughter Colleen Clawges, and significant other, Henry Hilderbrand, Richard Lynch, and me!

Many of you are signing up for our field trips (Birding Adventures) and we encourage you to do so. Check our list of upcoming tours on our website and join in! This time of the year is optimal for seeing our winter feathered friends. Thank you Doris Brookens and Kathy Mayshar!

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Photo by Dan Martinelli

Thursday, Feb. 2:

Presenter: **Gina Kent**

“Surprising Facts About the Short-tailed Hawk.” Gina Kent, Senior Conservation Scientist, Avian Research and Conservation Institute. Gina will present her research on these fascinating FL hawks. **This meeting will be in person and via Facebook Live.**

Field trip: Jones Hammock & Platt’s Creek Preserves

2051 Bell Ave., Ft. Pierce, FL

Thursday, February 16, 2023, 7:30 – 10:30 AM

Trip Leader: Eva Ries

This will be a 2-mile tour of adjacent St. Lucie Co. preserves with habitat including hammock and wetlands. Rails, warblers, and Limpkins are likely species. This is a walking tour over uneven ground, so wear comfortable shoes. **Please use the restroom before you arrive.** There is more information at the registration link below. Questions? Contact Doris at (717) 576-7876 or email dorisbrookens@gmail.com

Please register on our Web page:

<https://www.stlucieaudubon.org/field-trips>



“The goal of life is to make your heartbeat match the beat of the universe, to match your nature with Nature.” ~ Joseph Campbell

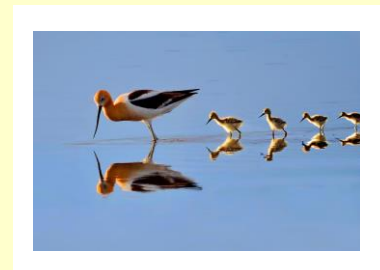
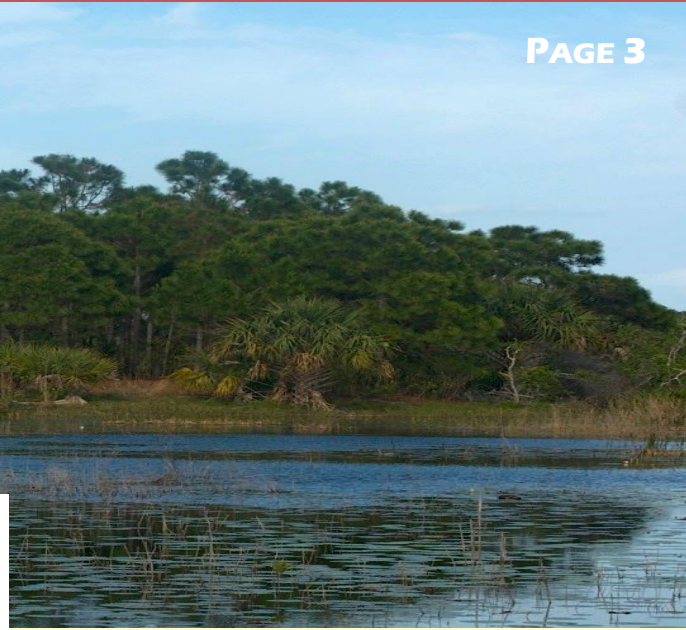
President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

(Continued from page 1)

Our CBC Compiler, Ed Bowes, has included a brief summary of our Christmas Bird Count in the Citizen Science column. Those of you who participated in the Christmas Bird Count will soon receive a summary of our County's results from Ed Bowes. If you would like a copy and did not participate, please let Ed know and he will share the results with you via email.

National Audubon sent an email blast to inform us that our members of Congress passed a bill, The Saline Lake Ecosystems in the Great Basin States Program Act, on December 20th of 2022 and signed into law by President Biden on December 27th. This act has established monitoring and assessment programs to benefit saline lake ecosystems that our birds depend on. More than 99% of North America's Eared Grebes, 90% of Wilson's Phalaropes, and more than half the global population of American Avocets depend on this network of saline lakes in the West. They recommend that we send them a thank you and ask them to continue championing this issue. I think the outgoing Congress did the right thing! Thanks!



Chapter Dues

The year for local chapter dues runs January to January. Dues can be paid by check or credit card on our Web site: <http://stlucieaudubon.org>

- Individual: \$25
- Family (2 or more people): \$30
- Sponsor: \$50
- Patron: \$100

The Laughing Gull

Photo by Ed Bowes

Citizen Science

BY ED BOWES

The 2022 Christmas Bird Count on December 17th was a success! Although there was some light rain in the morning, the weather cleared and cooperated the rest of the day. Thirty-two people counted birds that day, covering 570 miles by car, on foot, and by boat. A total of 25,000 individual birds and 125 species were recorded.

There were fewer small songbirds than usual recorded this year. The largest numbers were for Palm Warblers (170), Pine Warblers (33), and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers (84). Lowest numbers were for Blue-headed Vireos (2) and White-eyed Vireos (2). Three Scrub Jays made it on the count. The American Robins arrived late this year, with only 390 on the count.

For the larger birds, including waterfowl and waders, the tally recorded 660 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, 1250 Cattle Egrets, 325 Brown Pelicans, 6 White Pelicans, and 160 Sandhill Cranes. One Magnificent Frigatebird was sighted. Highlights for raptors were 5 Bald Eagles, 4 Crested Caracaras, and one Peregrine Falcon. A thank you to all participants!

Project Feederwatch started November 1st and runs through April 29th! You can count the birds that visit your backyard feeders all winter and report these counts to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. There is a fee of \$18 to participate for the 2022-2023 season. For more information and to join, visit this [link](#). There is still time to participate!

The Great Backyard Bird Count happens soon! This global bird count takes place annually on President's Day weekend. That means this year's count runs from February 17 to 20, 2023. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days that weekend at one or more locations—it's your choice! Keep track of the kinds of birds you see and how long you watched, then report those results via eBird.org

St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

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Science Advisor – Matthew Anderson

Raffle Coordinator – Wayne Pembroke

Board members may be contacted by email at stlucieaudubon@gmail.com

The Laughing Gull

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

One of our year-round residents is the White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*). This tiny insectivorous bird is 4 – 5 inches in length and very secretive. Cornell Lab of Ornithology describes it as larger than a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher but smaller than a Tufted Titmouse. It spends its time in very shrubby habitat gleaning insects from foliage. During breeding season, males sing all day long. As a consequence of this activity, it is more easily located by sound than sight.

When you do see a White-eyed Vireo, it will have olive-green upperparts, yellow sides and spectacles, a white throat and two white wingbars. You might note a yellow wash on the tail and wings, too. This bird gets its name from its eye color—a black pupil sits in a white eye. The yellow spectacles outline this white eye. Its legs and beak are black, and the beak is slightly downcurved.

Nests are located in a Y-shaped fork in a shrub about 2-6 feet above the ground. Nests are pendulous, and constructed from spiderweb and other insect silk. The vireos will then fill the shell with leaves, plant fiber, even bits of paper. Plant material is stuck to the outside of the spiderweb shell to serve as camouflage.

Look for this bird in thick cover, along woodland edges, overgrown fields, waterside thickets, and in mangrove stands. In non-breeding season, watch for vireos eating fruit in sumac bushes, dogwood tress, and wax myrtle. White-eyed Vireos have been recorded in Bluefield Ranch Preserve, Pineland Preserve, Paleo Hammock Preserve, Teague Hammock Preserve, George LeStrange Preserve, and the Platt's Creek Preserve.

Top photo by Hart Rufe. Bottom photo by Linda Sullivan.



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

Thursday, March 9, 2023

T. M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, March 2, 2023

“Dolphin Spotter—A New Land-Based Citizen Science Project”

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

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